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# Non-formal education for girls and gender role in Japanese modern history

— with special reference to the case of SHOJOKAIs —

Yoko Watanabe

In modern Japan between 1910s and 20s, there were a lot of female youth groups being set up all over the country, in the farmland or mountainous areas or fishing villages, with various background and for various purposes. Though the names and membership and activities of these groups were widely diverse, they were mainly called as 'SHOJOKAI' s.

In this paper, the development and the feature of SHOJOKAIs are examined, focusing on what were expected to their member-girls as the future women working in farmland and so on. How was the gender role expectations as 'mother', 'wife', and 'daughter-in-law ('yome')' related or reflected to the policy and practice of non-formal education in such groups? In the studies of history of education so far, the only purpose of education for girls has long been regarded as training for 'A Good Wife and Wise Mother(RYOSAI-KENBO)'. This woman model was originally produced mainly for girls from the middle class in the cities, but there has been a tendency of treating it as the universally effective woman model, across the class, of the prewar Japan. However, there actually existed an another woman model in SHOJOKAIs, which was expressed as 'A Working Wife and Healthy Mother (DOSAI-KENBO)' .

At the beginning of the paper, the significance and the location of SHOJOKAIs' study are clarified. After reviewing the outline of the development and the main character of SHOJOKAIs, the process of foundation and the formation of the Central Office are described. Then, the woman model 'A Working Wife and Healthy Mother' is carefully examined, referring to the educational policy of the Central Office(especially with the intention of the most influential officer Fujio Amano), the political and social background, and the educational slogan in the SHOJOKAIs' activities. Furthermore, the two women models, 'A Good Wife and Wise Mother' and 'A Working Wife and Healthy Mother' are analyzed, in comparison.

## 1. The study of Japanese history of education in the gender perspective

In prewar Japan, the formal education system especially the secondary education onward had been developed with the tacit premise that its target group was boys. The discussion of educating girls was mostly limited to the subordinary sphere of 'Girls' Education' (=education at girls' schools), which was accessible only for the girls from the middle class. However, at the same time, the majority of girls in the farm or mountainous districts or fishing villages, who had to work every day and help the household work from their childhood, were actually getting out of schooling at the very early stage. And also, there was a strong conviction among the common people that girls in such districts do not have to study any longer than primary school level.

In the studies of education and related field of research, until recently, 'education for girls' has mostly been regarded as the matter of specific sphere of 'Girls' Education'. So this 'Girls' Education' has been treated as the matter of only a small part of educational study. However, I suppose, it should be confirmed as the matter of gender-unequal and -uneven structure of the formal educational system as a whole.

Girls' Education had been regarded to take place in mainly at secondary schools, such as public and private senior girls' schools' (Kôtô-Jogakkô), private (especially religious) girls' schools, and also several private vocational schools for girls. In secondary girls' schools, especially senior girls' schools, the main purpose of education was training girls and preparing them into 'Good Wives and Wise Mothers'.

Senior girls' schools became a part of the formal educational system in the latter half of Meiji Era. The educational standard and content of education in senior girls' schools were said to be much lower and limited compared to those of (boys') secondary schools. This made it clear that there was a tacit premise either that boys should be educated much fuller than girls, or girls should not be educated as much as boys. In either case, the important point is that education was expected to play a different role for boys and girls. Developing the individuals into the socially effective or available manpower, on one hand, and into the private supporters of existing manpower and producers of the new manpower at home, on the other hand.

'A Good Wife and Wise Mother' was the woman model that was NOT supposed to go to work. It was the woman model from the relatively well-off social status, which included such as the white-collar families in the cities and the landowner families in the countries. Most of the previous historical studies in education had not clearly pointed out the class-biased nature of this woman model. Kuni Nakajima once tried to explain the background of why this model was produced and prevailed, in 1910s-30s, among the young women working in the city as clerks or some other vocations in fashion. She described the contradictions between the development of the capitalism and the intention of the government to make the middle class settled as the symbol of the social order and 'the good example' for the people (see Reference 11). However, it has not been explored if this model was also raised for the common young women in the countries, nor why this class-biased woman model has been treated as the universal woman model of prewar Japan.

Then, what kind of educational opportunities could the majority of girls(who did not go on into the secondary education and onward)enjoy, before the World War II? And what kind of woman model was presented for the girls who HAD TO WORK?

To answer these questions, I will take the example of SHOJOKAI, which was the area-based youth group for single young women. It was mainly intentionally organized by the local (in many cases female) leaders for various reasons and in various way, and later, with the Central Office led by the Ministry of Domestic Affairs, became the first national organization in Japan of non-formal education for girls after primary school.

## **2. The development and main characteristics of SHOJOKAIs**

### **a. The feature of development**

Some SHOJOKAIs developed from/with FUJINKAIs (area-based female groups mainly of married women), some followed the example of SEINENDANs (area-based male youth groups), and others were organized completely independent of any other organizations.

In 1917, Ministry of Domestic Affairs made the first national survey on the female youth groups, and began to select the "the Best SHOJOKAI" as a good example to follow, as well as "the Best FUJINKAI". According to the survey, a lot of SHOJOKAIs were organized in almost every prefecture, especially in the west part of the country - Kinki, Chûgoku, Shikoku, and Kyûshû District. SHOJOKAI was suspected to have differed not only by the conditions of the climate or geography, but also by how it was located in the political /social conditions of each district.

There were 12,806 SHOJOKAIs with 1,206,348 members in 1925. SHOJOKAIs' activities were not so active or so socially committed as those of SEINENDANs. The SEINENDANs numbered 16,263 bodies with 2,372,651 members in the same year, although the amount of money spent per year for SEINENDANs was over 4.5 times as much as that of SHOJOKAIs.

### **b. The background**

There are several key factors in understanding the background of the development of SHOJOKAIs.

First, in the latter half of Meiji Era, the Japanese government and society were beginning to put more and more emphasis on the women's role in the domestic economy at each household. The contribution of women at home was regarded as the basis of the betterment of whole economy of villages, which were supposed to be the smallest units of the national economy. Second, since the Japan-Russia War(1904-05), the national policy, especially of the accomplishment and triumph of wars, had required more national support from wider range of people including women at home. Third, there was a tendency among the young people to dislike the village life on agriculture, and have a strong yearning for the city life. Especially, young women in farm areas preferred to marry white-collared salaried men such as teachers or office workers rather than farmers. This tendency was a serious problem not only for the young men in the villages, but also for the headquarters of the villages and the directors of youth groups. Fourth, in such social conditions, there was an anticipated anxiety among the village leaders that women in rural villages would soon 'be awakened' by the impact of women's liberation movement in the city, by way of the mass media such as books and magazines.

### **c. The organization and the organizer**

Some SHOJOKAIs were organized based on the graduate class meeting from primary schools, some were developed from the out-of-school sewing class, some were separated and became independent from local FUJINKAIs, and others were newly organized by the leadership of the influential leaders of the villages for some specific reasons. The leaders

were mainly village masters, school principals, or philanthropists. The wives of the influential leaders and female as well as male teachers of primary schools were also supporting the management and activities of SHOJOKAIs.

And, in some areas where SEINENDANs were organized successfully and dealing with a lot of activities, SHOJOKAIs were set up to cooperate and work with SEINENDANs, mainly by their staff members.

#### **d. The characteristics and the main activities**

SHOJOKAIs were located as one of the Shuyo-Dantai (training agency of growing the members to control themselves mentally and morally), as well as SEINENDANs and FUJINKAIs. (These bodies often shared not only the activities, but also the office and/or directors.) However, their main policies and activities were so much influenced by the geographical, socio-economic, and cultural conditions, and also by the social power relations in the region.

The main activities of SHOJOKAIs were the following:

the workshops on the domestic work and side jobs; many kinds of lectures on the new roles, attitudes and ethics of Japanese women in the new coming era; supplementary lessons mainly on reading; writing and basic numeracy (by way of Sunday schools, seasonal special schools, and so on); athletic meet and respect-for-the-aged meetings (these were sometimes cooperative activities with SEINENDANs); study tours (sometimes overnight tours); circular readings of newspapers and books, circular libraries or mini libraries; expositions or fairs; volunteer works or charities (sometimes with SEINENDANs or with FUJINKAIs); activities for the improvement of domestic life and public morality; and so on.

#### **e. the foundation of the Central Office**

The Central Office of SHOJOKAIs (SHOJOKAI Chuo-bu) was established in 1917 by the leadership of the Ministry of Domestic Affairs. Fujio Amano, a non-regular officer who was employed for the duty of the improvement of the non-formal education in the farm villages, made so much effort for the foundation of the Central Office. It was organized not only by the officers of the Ministry of Domestic Affairs and the Ministry of Education. But it also included the female educationalists who were famous for their theory and practice in secondary or higher education for girls.<sup>(2)</sup>

The Central Office intended to work for the encouragement of the organization of local SHOJOKAIs, researching on and solving the women labor problem and setting up of in-factory SHOJOKAIs, counseling and recruiting or mediating for the jobs of women in the city, co-ordinating the training workshops for the SHOJOKAI directors, sending out the lecturers to the SHOJOKAI meetings in rural areas, the publication of the monthly magazine 'SHOJO-NO-TOMO' (virgins' friend) and some originally edited books, and so on. Though Amano devoted himself to the work of the Central Office, they could not afford and maintain what they first tried to attain.

In 1926, both the Ministry of Domestic Affairs and the Ministry of Education announced

the formal cooperative statement for the female youth groups. The Central Office was closed and dissolved, and the local SHOJOKAIs were reorganized into the National Association of Female Youth Troops (Dai-nihon Rengo JOSHI-SEINENDANs).

### **3. The woman model among SHOJOKAIs**

#### **a. The name of 'SHOJOKAI' as a symbol**

In the contemporary context, 'SHOJO' is a Japanese word meaning a single woman who has no sexual experience with men before (The usage of the word in Japan had been relatively common until 1960's or 70's, but since mid-80's onward, it is rarely heard in our daily lives). It might have been that people in the beginning of 1900s used this word more of the simple meaning of women before marriage rather than the sexual purity. For example, we can often find a young woman expressing herself as a 'SHOJO' just as 'I' rather naturally in the articles (ex. the letters from the readers) of women's magazines in 1900s-20s. So such ideological usage of 'SHOJO' by the SHOJOKAI staffs at this period might be something to look at carefully, as the bud of social (later, State) control of sexuality of women.<sup>(3)</sup>

'KAI' means a organization or a group. As the literally meaning shows, SHOJOKAIs were the female youth groups of non-formal education to educate and train girls after the primary education till their marriage age. Though their names were not unified in the beginning, after the Central Office was set up, the majority of groups followed the example and preferred to be called as SHOJOKAIs (some of the already existing groups with other names changed them into 'SHOJOKAI' at this period). As the matter of fact, the name of SHOJOKAI itself symbolized the nature of the organization.

#### **b. Amano's educational intention on SHOJOKAIs**

As noted before, the most influential staff of the Central Office was Fujio Amano, a non-regular officer of the Ministry of Domestic Affairs. He used to be a director of SEINENDAN and SHOJOKAI at his homeland in a small village of Sizuoka Prefecture. According to his experience, Amano emphasized the educational effectiveness of the name 'SHOJOKAI' itself and its cooperative activities with SEINENDAN. He thought it was getting more and more important for the directors of the youth groups to take the needs and anxieties of male and female youngsters into consideration in their every-day non-formal education practice.

Again, 'SHOJO' means a single young woman, or a virgin. SHOJOKAI was to make the member always be aware of herself as pure as a virgin, not only mentally but also physically (or sexually). The leaders of the Central office made it clear that SHOJOKAI was the training agency for the self-control or self-defense against the influence of the city culture, the women liberation movement, unwillingness for the farming or other household manual labor, and sexual temptation. Amano expressed the anticipated anxieties of the village leaders as 'women issues in the farm villages' in his books.

Also the Central Office hoped SHOJOKAIs to play a role as the 'supportive organization' for SEINENDANs. Especially, through the cooperative activities of the both youth groups, girls were expected to influence the boys in such a way that the educators (directors) intended

Table 1

BANZUKE-HYO (The ranking list of the mutual requests) between SEINENs (male youth) and SHOJOs (female youth)

the Judge : personality ; virginity

Produced by the Central Office of SHOJOKAI

From SHOJOs to SEINENs	Ranking	From SEINENs to SHOJOs
Value the women's virginity	YOKOZUNA (Grand Champion)	Avoid the vanity
Cut the hair very short (as Gobugari)	OZEKI (Next to Grand Champion )	Improve your knowledge and intelligence
Take away all the alcohols	SEKIWAKE (3rd Strongest)	Make an effort to read books
Do away with sexual harassment	KOMUSUBI (4th Strongest)	Train to make up the tough body
Do not put on the golden teeth	MAEGASHIRA (5th Strongest)	Do not look down on the manual labor
Do not wear the imitation glasses	MAEGASHIRA (5th Strongest)	Do not spend much time only on powdering
Follow the rules of the organizations	MAEGASHIRA (5th Strongest)	Do not adorn the city life
Take away with perfumes	MAEGASHIRA (5th Strongest)	Do not waste time in chatting
Have a lofty ideal	MAEGASHIRA (5th Strongest)	Try to find out hobbies of higher standard
Do not be absent from the evening class	MAEGASHIRA (5th Strongest)	Do not despise on the poor
Do not smoke	MAEGASHIRA (5th Strongest)	Equip yourself with the social intelligence
Approve of the personalities of women	MAEGASHIRA (5th Strongest)	Keep time
Do not sing vulgar songs	MAEGASHIRA (5th Strongest)	Take supplementary lessons
Be conscious about what's going on in society	MAEGASHIRA (5th Strongest)	Promote to have consciousness as women

REQUEST to SEINENDANs from SHOJOs	Ranking	REQUEST to SHOJOKAIs from SEINENs
Correspondence and cooperation	YOKOZUNA (Grand Champion)	Correspondence and cooperation
The athletic meets in cooperation	OZEKI (Next to Grand Champion )	The respect-for-the-aged meetings in cooperation
The fair and square attitude	SEKIWAKE (3rd Strongest)	The attendance to the meetings
Avoid the denunciation and the sneer	KOMUSUBI (4th Strongest)	Do not make the meeting fashion shows
The marriage with mural understanding	MAEGASHIRA (5th Strongest)	The achievement of the cooperative spirit
The attainment of the social service	MAEGASHIRA (5th Strongest)	Do away with the dependency
The foundation of a cooperative institute	MAEGASHIRA (5th Strongest)	The reduction of the marriage cost
The SPONSORS: female teachers; the village masters; the wives of the school masters; female students; midwives; The Society of National Patriot Women; groups of housewives; groups of female graduates;		The SPONSORS: the returnee soldiers from the fields; school masters; the priests of Shintoism and Buddhism; village masters; the society of self- governing units; the society of the heads of families;

from 'SHOJO NO TOMO' Vol.4 No.1, January, 1921, p.38.

them to lead ('The Educational EYES of OPPOSITE SEX'). For example, there was a tendency of young men who prefer to wear relatively longer hair with not a sun-tanned face (the popular style in the cities), which was against the men model the directors of SEINENDAN wished them to be.

Amano proposed that the directors should at first lead young women in SHOJOKAIs to favor the man of the short cut hair and the sun-tanned face (which implies the diligent farmers), and then, young men would be automatically change their attitudes in order to make an appeal to young women, without any straight pressure from the directors. He put a lot of emphasis on the educational inter-relationship between young men and women. Table 1 shows the wishes and requests for the opposite sex youth from each other, imitating the Sumo Wrestling Ranking List (Banzuke-Hyo).

### **c. the ideal woman model and the slogan**

Amano, who made so much energy setting up the Central Office, expressed the ideal woman model of SHOJOKAIs as 'A Working Wife and Healthy Mother'. This women model was introduced and explained in his two books on SHOJOKAIs published in 1916 and 1917 (see reference 2 and 3). It shows what was actually expected to the member-girls in the non-formal education in SHOJOKAI activities. As can be seen, "A Working Wife and Healthy Mother" was composed of the wife's role and the mother's role.

Let me describe this model referring to the well-known 'A Good Wife and Wise Mother.'

'A Working Wife', in contrast to 'A Good Wife' where women are not supposed to work so as to support her husband at home, may have reflected the everyday life of the ordinary people at that time. First, 'she' was expected to work diligently. This means not only working hard, but also not being bothered by the labor and/or woman liberation movements, socialist and/or woman liberation thoughts, and also the simple idea of 'sabotage' from the manual labor accompanied with the yearning for the city. Second, 'she' was expected to contribute to the improvement of the village through the domestic efforts at home. They included, for example, making the use of small amount of money, keeping the book, placing as much money as possible on deposit for the village bank, and so on. 'She' was also expected to be able to support her (future) husband in many ways, and lead him to love the village, determine to be settled there, and work hard as a member of the village. 'Supporting her husband' may be the common duty between these two woman models.

As 'A Wise Mother' reflected the educational needs of the city middle class family to support the children's study at home and strengthen the educational effects of schooling, 'A Healthy Mother' reflected the fundamental problem of the high death-rate of new-born babies. First, she was expected to have a body good and tough enough for bearing many healthy babies besides working in the field, with the hard living conditions of "daughters-in-law (yome)" both at home and in the farmland. She should be very healthy and sound, mentally and physically, governing her sexuality (keeping herself 'as pure as a virgin'), and have enough knowledge and fundamental attitude for maternity, childcare, and prevention from sickness.

This image was enlarged after the World War I, by the effect and the impact of the



outstanding achievements of European women contributing to the State in accomplishing the war in triumph. Amano's woman model was transformed into the very active and effective one, which he called as "The Women of the Post-War Farmland". The role of 'wife' and 'mother' in both the military and the ideological contexts were emphasized there.

In other words, the military aspect and the ideological aspect were added to the original model 'A Working Wife and Healthy Mother'. He expected women to have tough mind and body as "the military supportive woman" and to bring up the (male) children as the obedient and dedicated soldiers of the Emperor, as "the mother of the State". And ideologically, Amano expected "a good-natured woman", who respected and kept the conservative values and social order of the villages constituted of age, class, and gender. There was no place for the idea of womens' rights, nor human rights. He described his expectation with the words of kindness, tenderness and charity.

These three aspects of expectation for women - labor, military, and ideology-, were clearly mirrored in the slogan of SHOJOKAI. It was "Be strong, tender, and work diligently."

#### **4. conclusion**

'A Working Wife and Healthy Mother' meant to use for a wife working all day, in the field as hard as her husband, and at home managing household matters and child-rearing all by herself, and for a healthy mother, standing any hardships such as severe working conditions, short sleep, and the modest meal (typical for daughters-in-law in farmers' family), and being able to bear many children safely. (This model should be analyzed especially referring to the population policy of the State in 1930s to 40s from the standpoint of reproductive health and rights of women.)

'A Good Wife and Wise Mother' meant to use for a good wife to keep the house in order for her husband to go out to work without any anxiety, as well as to support him, and for a wise mother to love her children at the sacrifice of herself, educate them at home, and realize the peace and sound family life.

The finding in this paper are as following:

- a. In SHOJOKAI, women's productive work (farming and the equivalent) and reproductive work (domestic labor, child-bearing and childcare) were definitely located in the policy of education, and evaluated to a certain extent. It was surely reflected to the model expected. Therefore, the claim that the education for girls in prewar Japan equaled the training for 'A Good Wife and Wise Mother' turned to be neglected. And the class-biased nature of 'A Good Wife and Wise Mother' image as a role model was revealed.
- b. Between the middle class and the class of ordinary working people, expectations for women looked so different. However, they both put strong emphasis on the gender role of wives and mothers. And in each class, I presume, women were regarded as the key function either for maintaining the social order and the stability of the class structure in the society (such as Japanese patriarchy (iye) system) or for solving the specific problems they were facing (such as the population problem).
- c. In both woman models, women were taken not as a person with an independent

personality, but simply as achievers of given gender roles. The significance of education was recognized and shared commonly by the educators, as the means of training the girls for the 'desirable' attitudes, enough knowledge, and minimum practical training in order to pursue their expected role most effectively.

- d. Both models show that the State and society found the gender role as the convenient tool or instrument for attaining their political intention and economical needs. Actually and paradoxically, this mechanism helped and enhanced the development of the education for girls in modern Japan.

### Note

- (1) Japanese women's liberation movement started in 1911 with the foundation of Seito-sha, the group of women writers led by Raichô Hiratsuka, writing with their own words as the hearty self-expression of women under the bond of the control of the Japanese patriarchy system.
- (2) The main female educationalists were Fusako Yamawaki, Haruko Hatoyama, Masako Miwata, Utako Shimoda, Kakei Atomi, Takako Kaetsu, and Yayoi Yoshioka. Most of these women were founders or principals of girls' schools. Especially, Yoshioka founded the first private medical school for girls, which has developed into the Tokyo Medical College of Women (Tokyo Joshi Ika Daigaku) in 1952.
- (3) In 1940s, Japanese Government made a slogan "Bear more babies, and increase our population". Women were encouraged to have more children for the State. The mothers in the farm villages, who had ten or more children all finely growing up, were awarded as the excellent mothers of "superior family with many children".

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